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Radiation Reports Stir Many Who Had Served in Moscow

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Reports that the American embassy in Moscow has been bombarded for years by a mysterious form of radiation have astounded and angered many U.S. officials who have served in the Soviet capital.

"It is absolutely unbelievable that they never told us about it," the wife of one diplomat observed in a comment that typified those of a group of officials surveyed informally.

The survey suggests that the government has made no effort to keep track of people who served in Moscow to see if their health was adversely affected by radiation.

"No one has asked me if I've had any ill effects," said one military officer who was stationed in Moscow in the late 1960s. Others questioned gave the same answer.

A number of high-ranking diplomats are considering making a joint approach to senior State Department officials to demand a full explanation of just what they were exposed to in

Moscow, and what risks they underwent.

All of the people questioned for this story asked that their names not be used. They or their husbands are still employed by the government agencies that sent them to Moscow.

"If you ask me," one former embassy official said, "this is an issue that we ought to threaten to break relations over. It's ridiculous that we sit back and let them bombard the embassy with radiation that may cause serious health problems."

Official confirmation of the radiation problem has provoked a flurry of rumors among former personnel of the Moscow embassy.

According to one report circulating among wives, a nurse who served in the Moscow embassy has taken an informal tally that suggests an abnormally high rate of cancer among this group.

This assertion could not be confirmed. Several doctors consulted by these officials have told them that the effects of the low-level radiation that inundates

the Moscow embassy simply aren't known.

One woman who lived in the Moscow embassy some years ago said she and her son had both been able to feel a strange sort of vibration in their apartment. The son had headaches while he lived in Moscow, and they disappeared when he left.

She reported the strange sensation to embassy officials, who then questioned her at length in the embassy's "secure" room—a room lined with lead containing a large plastic bubble. They never told her that they knew the embassy was being radiated by the Soviets, she said.

Last week, according to a Reuter News Service report, the State Department sent a doctor to the embassy in Moscow to try to determine if two cases of lymphatic cancer and one of anemia could be attributed to the radiation.

Ambassador Walter Stoessel is reportedly suffering from anemia. State Department officials said he made several unpublicized trips to America for treatment during the last year.